**Keeping a Travel Journal**

The basic principles for keeping an effective travel journal include:

**1. Make and keep a commitment to journal writing.**

The journal is a key part of the learning experience and should not be left to chance. Carry your journal with you everywhere. Make notes about your impressions in it on a regular basis. Set aside time on a regular basis to review your notes and develop them in more detail.

**2. Be Selective.**

You can’t possibly write about everything you experience. Instead of trying to be all-inclusive, focus on your key experiences. Write about your key experiences concretely and with depth.

**3. Give your journal a clear structure.**

Here’s a structure that works well for a travel journal. A small loose-leaf binder works best for this kind of travel journal. Divide the binder into five parts:

1. **Impressions.** In this section, you jot down quick, short notes about your experiences. The goal here is to list things that you may or may not want to write about in more depth later on.
2. **Descriptions.** In this section you write descriptions of people, places, or things that you have seen. The idea here is to capture word pictures that recreate some of the sights, smells, and sounds you have experienced. This is a creative kind of writing that exercises your powers of observation.
3. **Stories.** In this section you write short stories about events you have experienced. Here you recreate some of the dramatic events of unique adventures you have experienced.
4. **Reflections.** In this section you ponder and explore the meaning of your experiences. What are you learning? How are you changing? Who are you becoming? Why are these experiences important?

For more suggestions on how to structure your journal, please refer to the document entitled “Travel Journaling: Structure and Content Tips.”

**4. Use all three steps of writing: brainstorming, composing, reflecting.**

The “impressions” part of your journal is for brainstorming. The “descriptions” and “stories” parts of your journal highlight points you noted in your brainstorming and makes them more concrete. The “reflections” section draws out the personal meaning and significance of your descriptions and stories.

**5. Share your writing with others.**

Writing improves with an audience. Let others read parts of your journal. Take time during the trip to share your writing.